There is no material evidence to
513 the tradition that there was once a Jewish colony in Elbasan.

443 The picturesque brown bazaar is held once a week just outside the south wall, and nowhere in all Albania is there to be found such a grand confusion of color as among the native costumes on market-day, which is generally Saturday.

346 There are several fine old mosques which are gems of Turkish architecture, especially that of Nazireshe located near the Vlach quarter, and it is one of the oldest and most beautiful in the country.

Among the newer buildings are the archaeological museum, the Baholi library, the normal school, erected at the foot of the dense olive groves just north of the town, and the
274 new Alcohol factory a very few miles along the road leading to Korcha (Korça). The
• 485 Grand Hotel and the Hotel Adriatik, with excellent European and native cuisines, add much to the desirability of visiting this Albanian center.

000 A strange, weird beauty is found among the olive groves at Elbasan, and the many walks through these young forests are indeed delightful. They add a strong note of contrast,

Hotels and Restaurants

• 485

THERE are innumerable large and small but most comfortable hotels throughout Albania.

While one must not expect to find in Albania the same kind of large modern hotels as in London, New York, Paris and Vienna, the traveller will find clean and comfortable hotels, with running hot and cold water, like the Continental Hotel and Hotel International in Tirana, which two are classified in the first class category, and the Hotel London, Adriatik Hotel and the Hotel Metropol, also in Tirana, which are classified in the category of second class, but, of course, there are several other hotels. In Scutari (Shkodra) the tourist will find the Grand Hotel, Hotel International and the Park Hotel very comfortable, but the Park Hotel has no restaurant, while the others have first class restaurants. Garages serve the majority of the hotels throughout Albania. In Durazzo (Durrës) the main hotels are the Isola Bella, Miramare and the Palace. The two largest first class

HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

445 hotels in Elbasan are the Grand Hotel and Adriatik Hotel. From Elbasan to Llixha is fourteen kilometers where there is a special hotel in connection with the thermal baths. The Hotel Colombo is the largest in Berat. The most convenient hotels of Valona (Vlona) are the Adriatik and the Gambino. The Palace Hotel of Korça is very nice and the restaurant in connection will satisfy the pallet of the most fastidious. In Argyrokastro (Gjinokastra) the largest hotels are the Savoja and the Royal. At Santa Quaranta (Saranda) the Piro Palas is the best. This latter city is the most convenient stop to visit Butrinto, Delvina and Himara for these three towns are all within a very short distance.

265 There are countless large and small restaurants throughout the country—spotlessly clean—serving the most delicious, tasty food —American, European or Oriental.

000 likely to be. Obviously the answer depends on the individual's personal tastes in accommodations and how he or she spends the time.

•485 In Albania the visitor may spend as much or as little as he may like. There are accommodations of every type, metropolitan, residential, suburban—whatever taste and purse dictate. However, because Albania is a year 'round playground one escapes the "peak" prices necessary in resorts having only brief "seasons" each year.

Ordinary expenses in Albania will never exceed those at home.

Furthermore, surveys indicate that costs in Albania are about forty per cent under the average for Europe as a whole.

000 Conditions in Albania are such that summer and winter hold much more attraction to the visitor than do the periodical summer or winter weeks elsewhere.

To spend a few days, weeks or months in Albania is to be furnished with refreshing and delightful memories for years to come!

494 463 horses at the customer's expense, and will refuse to go on if the grain is exhausted. All kinds of situations arise to produce arguments between *kiragi* and customer, such as the unexpectedly high price of grain in a certain place, inn charges, and the condition of the horses.

Besides carrying passengers and their goods, the *kiragi* will do errands; he will carry goods to market without their owners, sell them, and take his commission; then he will bring back a specified list of purchased objects. He must be reasonably honest or he will lose the traffic. At the same time the mountaineers who hire him are spared the risk of crossing hostile territory.

[473] *Kiragis* are either in business for themselves or in partnership, or working on shares with an investing capitalist. Since Islam prohibits interest, the share system is the one employed. It is not big business, for the maximum number of persons involved will not exceed a half dozen, including the boys whom the *kiragi* takes with him to help with the horses. It is, however, one of the few ways in which the otherwise closed country of the Gheg mountaineers is systematically and constantly penetrated. In 1929 there must have been at least a hundred such professionals on the roads every day.

485 In Moslem country the principal roads are equipped, at appropriate distances, with inns. As with tourist cabins in the United States, it is best to start at daybreak or earlier, and get in well before sunset, for the inns are often full well before night. The usual inn consists of 3 rooms; a large stable, which occupies about three-fourths of the whole; a chamber with a low ceiling built into one corner of the building, some 14 feet wide by 30 or 40 feet long, with a fireplace at the far end; and a cubicle which serves as the *hanji's* (innkeeper's) private quarters, office, and store.

When you enter the inn, the *hanji* sees that you unload your animals, and assigns them space in the stable. He has straw there, and sometimes grain if you have not brought your own. Then he gives each guest a section of the floor, which is divided into 3 strips, the 2 on the sides being about 6 feet wide, and the center one, 2 feet. Guests sleep side by side on the lateral strips, with the center reserved as a passageway. The guests feed themselves.

485 with cooking privileges at the fireplace, while the host brews coffee for sale, and also dispenses *raki*. After his guests are in for the night he locks the door, and cannot ordinarily be persuaded to unlock it before morning, no matter how urgent the needs of the guests to go outside. This precaution is necessary owing to the frequency of violence.

Some of the *hanjis* are local men. Others come from Kruja, the home of innkeepers. All of them live as bachelors. This system, like the *kiragi* business, brings a certain number of outsiders into the country. All in all there are probably 12 to 18 *hans* in Ghegnia, in addition to the one European-style hotel at
574 Peshkopia. The Catholics do not use this system; in their tribal areas guests are put up by important individuals through a system of re-
[628] ciprocal hospitality. Since local feuds are usually more prevalent in Catholic than in Moslem country, travel across the former is relatively light.

438 There remains only the question of trade, which has been partly covered.[1] On the whole it may be said of the mountain Ghegs that they live by a regional, or geographic, and perhaps also ethnic, division of labor. The ordinary man is a farmer, who produces firewood, cereals, legumes, tobacco, wool, milk products, and sometimes wooden spoons. His wife produces cloth, crocheted stockings, embroidered scarfs, baskets, eggs, and a few other local products. These mountain products find their way to the market towns. Usually men and women come together; sometimes only the women make the trip, and sometimes the whole family stays at home, sending the goods by a *kiragi*.[2]

The Ghegs are able to export these things because they produce a slight surplus of agricultural products. One reason for the surplus may be that they use a number of labor-saving devices, including fulling and mealing mills run by water power.[3] This gives them more time for other pursuits, but does not increase their complexity of relations at home, since the mills are small and serve individual groups of related families.

1 [See cat. 116, pp. 20a-20b --Analyst]
2 [See cat 116, pp 20a-20b Analyst]
3 [See cat 116 pp 17b-18a --Analyst]

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CHAPTER VI

A Useful Shoe Sole—A Grand Hotel—A Railway Line—The Conservative Peasant—Tirana—"Plenty of English"—Ahmed Zogou—To Durazzo—The Bigamist—Diplomatic Worries—"Look for the Oil!"—Baghdadis—To Valona—The Snorer—Kanina—Fighting Malaria—Kossovari Refugees—Boring for Oil.

A HODJA

THE question "What becomes of old motor-tyres?" would probably be as difficult for the average person to answer as the Sunday-school child's query to the bishop "How many legs has a caterpillar got?" The average person, however, has not been to Scutari. If he had, he would answer without hesitation "They are sent to Albania and made into shoe-soles."

The cobblers' shops in the Scutari bazaar are piled high with used tyres—knobbed, grooved and studded—either whole or cut into convenient lengths. And the shoes themselves, thus soled, are strong and serviceable—if not particularly elegant—and are at the same time almost as pliable as the native upanka. It seems an excellent way of using up old rubber.

The Grand Hotel, Scutari, is grand only in name. My bedroom was next door to a malodorous lavatory, but I insisted on clean sheets and got them—and that was something.

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To the Land of the Eagle

485 When I came down in the morning to get a cup of coffee before leaving for Tirana, I found the waiter asleep in the "coffee-room" with the remains of last night's supper on the uncleared tables and every window tightly shut. The noise I made in rushing to open something and save myself from immediate asphyxiation woke him up, and he arose from his bed—to strain a simile to its utmost limits—like Aphrodite from the waves, completed a scanty toilet with the aid of a comb, and attended to my modest requirements in the way of breakfast. At seven the car came and I departed, nothing loth.

494 [505] The car was a nine-seater, and the other passengers, including several Roman-Catholic priests, were going by it to San Giovanni di Medua, whence a steamer connection is maintained with Bari, the Italian seaport on the opposite 361 side of the Adriatic. *Rome—Bari—San Giovanni di Medua* is the direct route to Albania, and I was accordingly surprised to find the place so small and insignificant. It contained little more, as far as I could see, than a tiny wharf, a custom-house, a police post, and a few single-storied shacks 504 —mostly coffee-houses—along the waterfront. The bay being very shallow, the steamer was anchored some distance out, and passengers had to be taken aboard by shore boats. But San Giovanni di Medua is no worse in this respect than the other ports of Albania, Durazzo, Valona, and Santi Quaranta, which all suffer, as I found later, from the same drawback. In none of these places is the water deep enough to allow a vessel to lie at the quay.

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soils his hands with work!—and in the end his project had to be abandoned. Since the wealth of every country comes in the first instance from the soil, this attitude of mind is to be deeply deplored. All possible means of making the soil more productive should be welcomed.

Tirana, the Albanian capital and seat of government, is not a particularly impressive place. Its chief claim to notice, politics apart, lies in its mosques, which are all very beautiful examples of old Byzantine architecture and decoration. The streets are of rough cobbles—very uncomfortable to the feet—and the houses are, for the most part, of one storey only. The shops are the rickety wooden boxes one expects to find in this part of the world, and their proprietors sit, in Turkish fashion, at the receipt of custom.

I lunched soon after my arrival at the Hotel Internationale, which is the centre of the political life of the place. It is frequented by the deputies and their friends, and discussion and argument go on all day long over the coffee-cup and the raki glass. While I was struggling with the menu, which was Greek to me, a lady, seeing my difficulty, spoke to me in English and offered her assistance. She was an American and we got into conversation. One of the first things she said was, "You will find plenty of English here". I was astonished. That there was a British Legation at Durazzo I knew, but that Tirana contained "plenty of English" was news to me. Nor did it seem a place to attract the tourist. The meeting with the American did not surprise me so much, as I knew that there were American

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Ahmed Zogou

Ahmed Zogou is still in the early thirties. He is a strong man and consequently has enemies, and several attempts have already been made upon his life. The story goes that on one occasion he was shot at and wounded in two places whilst presiding at a sitting of the Chamber. Taking his revolver from his pocket he placed it on the table in front of him and proceeded with the business in hand—whereupon 643

FETCHING WATER

the deputies as one man rose to their feet with arms upraised. They were taking no chances.

The Hotel Internationale being full, I obtained quarters at the Hotel Continental.[1] This is the hotel fancied by the English and is run on modern lines. It even possesses that extreme rarity, a bathroom—probably, with the exception of one at the British Legation, the only one in 485

[1] [in Tirana -- Analyst]

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To the Land of the Eagle

485 Albania. The charge for a bath is equivalent to 2s. 6d.—a large sum of money in those parts—and it takes the combined efforts of the hotel staff the whole day to get the water hot. So at least I was told by a resident. I found the hotel quite comfortable, and anyone visiting Tirana can stay there without hesitation. It is the most up-to-date hotel in the country.

000 I was invited to breakfast on the following morning with the colonel who had charge of this reorganisation business. He was going to Durazzo and had kindly suggested that I might accompany him. After a very acceptable real English breakfast we left in the inevitable Ford, and a run of an hour and a half, through what a rider to hounds at home would call "good hunting country," brought us to Durazzo. The president happened to be staying there, and on this account the town was very full. As there was no accommodation available at the hotel, the British Minister took pity on me and very kindly put me up at the Legation, where, needless to say, I was infinitely more comfortable than I should have been elsewhere. I had previously written and told him that I was coming, and had asked him, incidentally, whether it would be possible for him to give me introductions to native Albanians, so that I should have an opportunity of seeing something of their home life. This request, however, he felt himself unable to accede to, and explained his refusal by telling me how he once had been deceived by a plausible Englishman who came to him with a similar request and afterwards cashed £150 worth of bogus

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To Valona

it is built. Landwards, fading into a purple haze, stretched 361
the flat marsh. In the far, far distance were the mountains, a rugged line faintly discernible against the background of sky.

The voyage, which took the greater part of the day, was uneventful, and brought us to Valona the same evening two hours late—though that, as things go hereabouts, is considered punctual. The town is a mile or more distant from the port, and as one of the Albanian Ministers was a dis- 000
embarking passenger, a large crowd of his supporters met the boat and commandeered every available vehicle for themselves and for him. In consequence a young Italian business man and I found ourselves stranded at the port with our baggage, and it was an hour and a half before we were able to secure a *carozza* and set out for the town. At [485]
the Hotel Gambino, which appeared to be the principal hotel, our arrival was met with apologetic shrugs and the statement "tutto occupato" (Italian being largely spoken in Valona). And not only so, but we were assured in addition that every house in the town was in a similar position on account of the Minister's visit and the approaching elections. However, we dined, and after dinner raised the question again, whereupon the proprietor made me a speech which began "Comme vous êtes anglais," and stated, as far as I could gather, that a man sitting at the next table had a room which contained two beds, and on account of my nationality had graciously consented to allow me to occupy the empty one. This I did—and hardly slept a wink all

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To the Land of the Eagle

133 The opposite side of the valley - which appeared to be two or three miles in width—was bounded by a formidable chain of mountains still covered with snow in places unreached by the sun.

361 It was evening before we came in sight of Argyrocastron itself. Rounding a bend of the road we suddenly had a fine view of the town, which occupies three parallel ridges of hill at right angles to the main range, the highest of the three topped by an immense old Turkish fortress, black, rugged, and forbidding. On a fourth, and smaller, ridge is a monastery with cypresses. I have seldom seen a town so finely situated or so impressive at first sight.

The lorry climbed the winding road on low gear and drew up in an open space or square among cafés crowded with people. Work was over for the day and the Argyrocastrians 485 were taking their ease. In a steep cobbled street beneath the fortress ramparts I found an inn. It was merely a pothouse and the accommodation was of the roughest. I secured a bedroom to myself, however—an unusual luxury in Albania, as I have already indicated. The ground floor, with a door opening on to the street, served as restaurant, bar, kitchen, larder, and general living-room. It was furnished with deal tables and benches. On the left of the door was a desk whereat the proprietor kept his accounts. 265 On the right was an enclosed counter with a long metal 485 tray containing lime, on which stood pots full of meat and vegetables slowly stewing. The tray was, in fact, a kind of fireless cooker. On a shelf below the tray were clean knives, forks and spoons, clean plates, and an enormous bowl of

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yaghourt. The publicity of the cooking arrangements, which is common to all Albanian eating-houses, has its advantages. It makes a menu unnecessary. The foreigner, just as easily as the native, can see for himself what food is available and can indicate the dish of his choice by pointing to it. In the inn at Argyrocastron, however, the publicity went unpleasantly far, for hanging from a rail of the staircase was to-morrow's dinner in the raw state—a defunct sheep all ready for roasting whole, with a long wooden spit struck through it lengthwise. This revolting sight brought me to the verge of vegetarianism, but since Albania, like Montenegro, is essentially a meat-eating country, I realised that it was not a suitable place to begin experiments in a vegetable diet, and I was therefore obliged to stifle my better instincts and carry on for the nonce in the old carnivorous way.

One feature of the Albanian inns that the traveller will remark is the absence of womenfolk. All the household work is done—and usually done very badly—by men or boys. At Argyrocastron the "chambermaid" was an Italian-speaking Albanian, dressed in a very old and shabby khaki uniform, who spared no pains to make me as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and was exceedingly grateful for the few liras I gave him on leaving. In fact, neither in Albania nor in Montenegro did I find that distressing greed for tips which is so characteristic of countries which claim to be much more civilised. Before I left Cettinje, being anxious to show my appreciation of services rendered by the

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To the Land of the Eagle

505 the near bank was thick with men, dogs, donkeys, mules, oxen, and merchandise, all waiting to be taken to the other side. It was a long time before our turn came, and then, as the fully loaded lorry was too heavy for the ferry-boat, two journeys had to be made, one with the lorry itself and the other with goods and passengers. All this spelled delay, and as a consequence we did not arrive at Permeti, the town where we were to stay the night, until it was growing dusk.

PEASANT WOMAN

485

The Permeti inn was primitive, but its roughnesses were mitigated by the willing efforts of the proprietor's small son, who did his best to make me comfortable and provided me with all the amenities the establishment could offer. He was a bright, intelligent lad, and ought—to use a typically Western expression—" to get on ". He gave me a room to myself, a clean upper sheet, and a clean towel. I looked at the wooden ceiling with misgivings, for the weather was getting warm. It painfully suggested bugs. But it had

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To Stifle or Freeze

recently been washed with paraffin, and a liberal quantity 485 of the same malodorous fluid had been poured on the floor round the legs of the bed, so that but for the smell I suffered no inconvenience, nor did I need to use my tin of insect powder, though I kept it handy in case of emergency.

In all the local inns they provide, as bedcovering, a quilt stuffed with wool, and a sheet. The quilt may be all right for the winter, but it is too heavy for spring and summer. Consequently one has to choose between stifling under the quilt or freezing under the sheet. Washing apparatus you may or may not find. Generally it is a tiny trickle of water from the bottom of a kerosene tin hung on the wall outside. Should there be a mirror in the bedroom, the distorted reflection you see in it will dispel once and for all any claims you may have privately entertained to good looks. You can please yourself whether or not you use the brush and comb which, since the Albanian travels in what he stands up in, you will always find provided.

I dined that evening at an eating-house of the usual type in company of the driver and conductor of the lorry and several natives. One of these, who spoke English, told me that during the previous week gendarmes had visited the town and, after rounding up the Greek and Roman Catholic population, had searched their houses and confiscated all their firearms and other weapons. He further asserted that the Mohammedan families had not been interfered with nor had their arms been taken, and that in consequence, the Christians went in fear of a massacre. I made leave to doubt

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The Inn

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cypresses. These cypresses[1] are the biggest I have ever seen. I never imagined that such cypresses existed or could exist. Even the tall Douglas firs of British Columbia, which attain a height of 400 feet, did not impress me as much as did these giants with their masses of solid foliage and their gnarled and knotted trunks thirty feet in circumference. It is worth while making a special journey to Elbasan to see them. This row of towering trees, almost black, walling in the little square and flooding it with their dense shadow, made a deep impression upon me. I saw no finer sight in all Albania.

• 485

The hotel accommodation in Elbasan is about what one would expect. The little place at which I stayed consisted of a nondescript shop below, where rope, lemons, corn, sugar, maize, nails, crockery, and all sorts of odds and ends were on sale, and a floor above with a landing, a lavatory, and three rooms all crammed with beds. It was tolerably clean, and the folk who ran it—an old Mohammedan named Osman Arapi, a youth, and a small boy—did everything possible to supply the, to them, rather remarkable demands of an English guest. The room in which I lived was pleasant and well lit, and I always had it to myself during the daytime. At night the other beds were usually occupied, and I never knew whom my companions might be. They were always accommodating and agreeable, however, and I soon became used to the lack of privacy. The washing arrangements were crude, and consisted of a basin on a soap-box in the corridor, but elsewhere, if you were

1 [in Elbasan-- Analyst]

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485 not over-particular, a shower bath, with the aid of a bucket, was possible.

As usual, the boy was the power behind the machine. He it was who made the beds, swept out the rooms, and supplied the milk, the coffee, the yaghourt, or whatever you might happen to want. He never took his clothes off (some day, I imagine, when he has grown to a certain size, he will burst out like a butterfly from its chrysalis and a new suit will become an imperative necessity), nor did the youth who sometimes shared his labours. The two of them slept together on the landing not only fully clad but beneath a pile of rugs and blankets, while I, in the bedroom next door, [291] though wearing only pyjamas, could hardly bear the weight of the single rezai. But the Albanian is insensible to heat, and even in the height of summer continues to wear his heavy homespun clothing and a vast waistband wound many times around his stomach.

Osman, my host, took a fatherly interest in my proceedings. He often came into my room and stood watching me while I wrote on the typewriter or made a drawing. On [574] these occasions he would roll a cigarette and present it to me wet from his tongue—a customary offering in this part of 000 the world which, of course, you must not refuse. As an art critic he was more well-meaning than discriminating. One day, I remember, I happened to finish a picture when he was in the room and gave it to him to look at. He turned it upside down, held it at arm's length, and, with his head on one side in the manner of the real connoisseur, exclaimed,

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To the Land of the Eagle

ooo —and its rapidity enabled me to accomplish in forty minutes a journey which had previously taken me six hours by car.

A remote Balkan country like Albania was the last place in which I expected to make my first flight, and I could not help thinking it remarkable that within a few days I should thus experience the two extremes of travel—the pack-horse and the aeroplane.

• 485 On this, my second visit to Scutari, I stayed at the Hotel Europa. From without it did not look attractive, as the larger part of it appeared to be either under repair or in course of demolition. But within I found it clean, and even —for an Albanian hotel—luxurious. I had a bedroom to myself, with a washstand, a wardrobe, and other articles of furniture to which I had for some time been a stranger. And, finally, I actually dared to sleep without socks on and to forego the elaborate barrage of insect powder without which I had found sleep impossible in the up-country inns.

361 Until recently, when the government migrated to Tirana for safety, Scutari was the Albanian capital and an important diplomatic centre. All the foreign legations were here, and there was a good deal of gaiety. Now, however, it is a dead-alive place with no social amenities such as there were in the old days. Personally I found the old town, which, with the ancient citadel, is about a mile away from Scutari proper,
291 by far the most interesting part. It has a bazaar thronged
361 with peasants in the picturesque costumes of the district, among whom are always to be found some of the gipsy or